

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: JANUARY 22, 2010

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS PITKIN
KENNY
BENTLEY
MERLINO
STRAINER
LOEB
MCDEVITT

OTHERS PRESENT:

SHEILA WEAVER, COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
SUZANNE WHEELER, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL
SERVICES
FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE &
FISCAL SERVICES
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISORS TAYLOR
THOMAS
TODD LUNT, DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES
SKIP STRANAHAN, WE THE PEOPLE FOUNDATION
DON LEHMAN, THE POST STAR
AMANDA ALLEN, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Pitkin called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 11:50 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the prior Committee meeting subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Mr. Pitkin began the meeting by welcoming new Supervisors Loeb and McDevitt to the Committee.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Sheila Weaver, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS), who distributed copies of the meeting agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is also on file with the minutes.*

Commencing the agenda review with Item 1, Ms. Weaver addressed the Overtime Report which was included in the agenda packet. She noted that the report reflected the history of overtime usage for the five most recent pay periods as compared to the same time periods during the prior year. Ms. Weaver apprised that overtime use had decreased by an average of 12 hours per pay period and she continued to determine further ways in which overtime costs could be decreased.

Ms. Weaver stated that Item 2 referred to the Budget status report and she advised that the agenda included separate Expense and Revenue Budget Performance reports for 2009, as well as an Expenditure and Revenue Tracking report covering the years 1990 through 2008. She pointed out that expenditures in Codes A.6010 120, Salaries - Overtime, were the lowest achieved since 2004, while expenditures in Equipment Codes A.6010 210 - 260 were the lowest incurred since 2003 and those in the Travel/Education/Conference Code, A.6010 444, were the lowest since 1994. Referring to the revenue reports, Ms. Weaver advised that 81% of projected revenues for 2009 had been received thus far and there were still some outstanding State revenues; she added that they anticipated the receipt of 100% of the anticipated revenues included in the 2009 Budget.

Mr. Geraghty questioned whether the Expense and Revenue reports were complete for 2009 and Ms. Weaver replied in the negative, noting that there were revenues and expenditures outstanding for 2009 which were not accounted

for in the reports. Ms. Weaver said she understood that any unexpended funding would be returned to the General Fund once all expenses and revenues were accounted for and the 2009 budget reports were reconciled.

Continuing to Agenda Item 3, Ms. Weaver presented a request to rescind Resolution No. 856 of 2009, Amending Resolution No. 113 of 1972; Increasing the Patient Fund at Countryside Adult Home. She said that although expenditures for Countryside Adult Home were included in the DSS budget and therefore her responsibility, she had not been apprised of the request made by the Director of the facility to increase the Patient Fund from \$600 to \$2,000. Upon learning about the increase, Ms. Weaver advised that she had contacted the Treasurer's Office and was advised that when requests were made by Countryside for encumbered expenditures, checks were issued within 24 hours to be sure that cash was available on hand for the Patient Fund. Because of the timely payments made by the Treasurer's Office and the history of expenditures from the Patient Fund which were primarily below the previous Fund limit of \$600, she said she did not feel an increase in the amount kept on hand was necessary. Additionally, Ms. Weaver apprised that there had been issues with money missing unexplainably from the Fund which had led to the use of the low \$600 balance. She concluded that she was not comfortable with the increased Patient Fund amount and requested that the resolution authorizing the increase be rescinded to return the Fund to its prior limits.

Mr. Strainer said that while he understood Ms. Weaver's view on the matter, there must have been a compelling argument in favor of the increase in the Patient Fund limit as the Health Services Committee, as well as the full Board of Supervisors, had approved the request.

Subsequent to further discussion on the matter, Mr. Kenny asked Ms. Weaver if she would be more comfortable with a \$1,000 Patient Fund limit and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to amend Resolution No. 856 of 2009 to decrease the Patient Fund amount from \$2,000 to \$1,000 and the necessary resolution was authorized for the February 19th Board meeting. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver announced that Agenda Item 4 consisted of a request to abolish a Grade 15 Investigations Coordinator position due to promotion, which would lead to a savings of \$44,703 in salary costs. She noted that this position was included in the reorganization plan for her Department which had included the abolishment of two positions, this being the second that she had promised to abolish after the reorganization plan was implemented. Ms. Weaver said she was unsure whether the costs for this position were included in the 2010 Budget.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Bentley to approve the request to abolish the Investigations Coordinator position.

Mr. Kenny questioned what portion of the salary associated with the Investigations Coordinator position was reimbursed to the County by the State and Ms. Weaver replied that she believed at least 75% reimbursement was received. Mr. Kenny noted that this would mean an actual savings to the County in the area of \$15,000, but said that any savings attained was acceptable. Mr. Strainer questioned if the position created in the reorganization plans received State reimbursement for salary costs and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively. Mr. Pitkin apprised that as per the review of JoAnn McKinstry, Deputy Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, the full salary for the position had been included in the 2010 Budget.

Mr. Pitkin called the question and the motion was carried unanimously to abolish the position of Investigations Coordinator and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver advised that Agenda Items 5 and 6 included a request to create a Medicaid Clerk position, with a base salary of \$25,916, and abolish a Social Welfare Examiner position, as well as for permission to fill the Medicaid Clerk position and any resulting vacancies due to promotion. She noted that the abolishment and position creation would gain a net savings of \$3,794 to the County.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Bentley to approve both items 5 and 6, creating the position of Medicaid Clerk, base salary of \$25,916, and abolishing the position of Social Welfare Examiner, as well as to fill the position of Medicaid Clerk, Intake Clerk, base salary \$24,908, and Keyboard Specialist, base salary \$23,799, and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *Copies of both requests and the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form are on file with the minutes. Note: the Intake Clerk and Keyboard Specialist positions will be vacated due to promotion.*

Moving on to Agenda Item 7, Ms. Weaver presented a request to fill a Typist/Keyboard Specialist position due to resignation. She noted that the correct title for this position would be Keyboard Specialist as the person performing the associated duties would be doing more computer work than actual typing; she added that the position received 80% State reimbursement and was necessary to the Department. Mr. Pitkin asked if funding for the position was included in the 2010 Budget and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant position of Typist/Keyboard Specialist, base salary \$23,799, and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver stated that Agenda Item 8 included a request to fill a Senior Caseworker position, as well as any resulting backfills due to promotion. She said that the position was necessary as the number of preventive caseloads continued to grow and she advised that 75% State reimbursement was received in association with the position.

Mr. Kenny noted that Agenda Items 8 through 13 all appeared to be requests to fill vacant positions and he suggested that all of the items be approved in one motion.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the requests to fill the following vacant positions and refer same to the Personnel Committee:

- Agenda Item 8 - Senior Caseworker, base salary \$35,784;
Caseworker, base salary \$34,776;
- Agenda Item 9 - Caseworker, base salary \$34,776;
- Agenda Item 10 - Support Investigator, base salary \$29,710;
- Agenda Item 11 - Account Clerk, base salary \$24,908;
- Agenda Item 12 - Community Service Assistant, base salary \$29,710;
Social Welfare Examiner, base salary \$29,710;
- Agenda Item 13 - Typist/Keyboard Specialist, base salary \$23,799.

Copies of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position forms for all positions are on file with the minutes.

Resuming the review with Agenda Item 14, Ms. Weaver presented several requests to attend State mandated training as follows:

- A) Michael Rayder to attend CW/CPS Common Core Training in Rochester, NY on January 26 - 29, February 8 - 11, February 23 - 26 and March 8 - 12, 2010;
- B) Deanna Park, Kyle Depew, Christina Lamora and Kristina Neel to attend Child Protective Services Response Training in Albany, NY on February 1 - 5, February 22 - 26, 2010;
- C) Tara Kelly and Shannon Rivera to attend Medicaid New Worker Institute Training in Albany, NY

- on March 1 - 5 and March 15 - 19, 2010;
- D) Andrea Corbin to attend CS/CPS Common Core Training in Albany, NY on March 1 - 5, March 15 - 19, March 31 - April 1 and April 12 - 16, 2010;
- E) Sheila Weaver to attend the NYSAC (New York State Association of Counties) 2010 Legislative Conference in Albany, NY on February 8, 2010;
- F) Lillian Hayes to attend Child Support 101 Training in Albany, NY on April 6 - 8, 2010;
- G) Jamie Brochu and Patti Martin to attend Chronic Care Institute in Albany, NY on April 20 - 23, 2010.

Mr. Stainer questioned if there were funds available in the Departmental budget to cover the training costs and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively. He then asked if mileage reimbursement applied for this training and whether overnight stays were allowed as the majority of the training was taking place in Albany. Ms. Weaver replied that mileage would not be paid as a County vehicle would be used; she added that during winter months she allowed staff to make their own determination as to whether or not they would remain overnight in light of the possibility of inclement weather.

Following a brief conversation on the matter, motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve all seven travel requests as outlined above.

Agenda Item 15, Ms. Weaver apprised, pertained to concerns with the security system being used in the Human Services Building (HSB). She explained that since their occupation of the HSB there had been only one occurrence requiring the use of the panic alarm by DSS staff. Ms. Weaver further explained that a staff member being threatened by a client had engaged the alarm; however, she said, it had failed to properly alert the HSB security staff and had instead registered with the offices of the security company that had installed the alarm system, who had immediately contacted the Sheriff's Office. She noted that the security company had been notified of the issue and had subsequently visited the HSB to review the security system, which she assumed had been fixed.

Mr. Thomas noted that if there were any problems with the HSB they should be addressed with Bovis Lend Lease and the appropriate contractor as the County had yet to sign their final approvals for the Building.

Subsequent to further discussion on the matter, Mr. Pitkin noted that the issue should be referred to the County Facilities Committee for further discussion.

Mr. Kenny said he had received a call from a constituent who had visited the HSB to attend a meeting with a specific person but was dismayed that upon entering the Building, the security guard in attendance was unable to direct him to the appropriate part of the building and he questioned why the security staff was not provided with a listing of staffing for review in cases such as these. Ms. Weaver responded that the security staff would not typically be responsible for directing visitors and that, at least for DSS visitors, the person staffing the desk at the window of the DSS would direct visitors to the appropriate part of their Department. Mr. McDevitt said he'd had a similar problem when he mistakenly entered the HSB while attempting to visit the Public Health Department. He said that when entering the Building, the security guard on duty did not have access to Departmental staffing information and could not direct him to the appropriate place. Mr. McDevitt said he felt an alphabetical list of staff by Department would be very helpful to the security staff and would provide a more organized public appearance.

Continuing to Agenda Item 16, Ms. Weaver provided an update on State funding. She apprised that subsequent to telephone briefings with the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and the New York

State Office of Children and Family Services, she had learned that four programs currently being offered by Warren County would be subject to the elimination of State funding in 2010, leading to a loss of approximately \$250,000 in funding. Ms. Weaver stated the funding would be eliminated for the Summer Youth Employment Program, SNAP (Safety Net Assistance Program) and the Community Solutions for Transportation contract. She noted that State funding for the Non-Residential Domestic Violence Program would also cease; however, she added, the County would be required to continue offering the Program as it was mandated by the State. Ms. Weaver advised that another area of concern was for the Adult Protective and Domestic Violence Program which had previously been uncapped and received 100% State reimbursement but would now be converted to a capped program with 50% State reimbursement.

When questioned as to the implications of the Non-Residential Domestic Violence Program, Ms. Weaver explained that services rendered in connection with the Program were provided by the Catholic Charities organization through a contract held with the County. She noted that the total cost of the contract was \$75,000 annually and \$25,000 in State funding had been provided to offset the contract cost. In response to Mr. Merlino's question regarding how the affected programs would be funded in the future, Ms. Weaver replied that the Summer Youth Employment Program, SNAP and the Community Solutions for Transportation contract would no longer be offered to residents once the State funding ceased.

Ms. Weaver apprised that the State had also imposed a claiming deadline for the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) Program. She said that this meant they would no longer be able to submit any retro-active claims and she noted that in the past they had submitted claims for services rendered up to two years prior for improperly opened claims. Ms. Weaver stated that this could potentially have a big impact on the Department and she had discussed the matter with her staff to impress upon them the need to open claims properly which would negate the need for retro-active claims. She further noted that they would be implementing an electronic process for eligibility determinations which would lessen the percentage of error for improperly opened claims.

Mr. Bentley said it was his understanding that the State had pledged not to introduce any new un-mandated programs and Chairman Monroe replied that this was correct, but noted that the programs being affected were not new and that the State had made no promises to continue funding mandated programs. Chairman Monroe stated his strong opinion that the Board of Supervisors should adopt a resolution stating that mandated programs would cease to be provided by Warren County if State funding was eliminated as they would not be able to sustain the 2010 Budget otherwise. Mr. Pitkin replied that he did not feel it was wise to blindly reduce mandated programs based on reductions in State funding as some might be detrimental to the County's well being and he suggested that these issues be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Mr. Kenny said he felt the solution was to allow Department Heads to find alternate funding within their budgets to cover the loss of funding through staff reductions and other measures.

Discussion ensued subsequent to which motion was made by Mr. Merlino, seconded by Mr. McDevitt and carried unanimously to authorize the elimination of mandated Social Services programs in accordance with the elimination of State funding, unless the Department Head was able to determine an alternate method of funding within the existing budget and the necessary resolution was authorized for the February 19th Board meeting.

Resuming the agenda review with Item 17 which consisted of an update on DSS staff timeliness, Ms Weaver announced that for the first time since she assumed the position of Commissioner, all staff members had been on time for work every day for the past week. She said that this was a considerable milestone for the DSS employees, as tardiness had been accepted by the prior Commissioner. In recognition of this achievement, Ms. Weaver said that she would be buying lunch for all DSS staff members. While the Committee members responded to this

announcement with a round of applause, Mr. Geraghty expressed his appreciation for Ms. Weaver's efforts but stated his opinion that it was ridiculous to reward employees for timely attendance which was required as part of their job.

Mr. Merlino stated that he had received an email from a DSS staff member regarding the cleanliness of the DSS portion of the HSB and he asked Ms. Weaver to comment on the issue. Ms. Weaver stated it did not appear that the cleaning staff was able to complete all of the work at their current staffing levels. She added that although the trash was usually emptied every night, the floors were not being vacuumed. Mr. Thomas interjected that this was an issue to be discussed at the upcoming County Facilities Committee meeting.

Mr. Kenny said he had received calls from members of the public complaining that they only received voicemail when trying to contact DSS staff, and one individual who had left a voice message and did not receive a return call for four days. Ms. Weaver replied that all staff had been directed to return calls within 24 hours, or risk the loss of voicemail privileges. However, she added, there had been some issues with the telephone system in the HSB, one of them being that the voicemail indicator light did not accurately reflect when voicemails were taken; therefore, she said, calls were not returned in a timely manner. Ms. Weaver concluded that she would be sure to remind her staff the messages were to be returned within 24 hours and would address any deviations from this policy on a case by case basis.

Mr. Strainer suggested that a designated smoking section be introduced at one end of the HSB to disallow smoking at the Building's entrance. He noted that cigarette butts were beginning to accumulate on the ground around the entrance and it was not fair to subject other visitors or staff, who might not be smokers themselves, to the smoke when entering the building. Mr. Strainer stated his opinion that requiring smokers to use one end of the building as smoking area might alleviate both of these issues. Mr. Kenny replied that a resolution had previously been adopted to ban any and all smoking within 50 feet of any building entrance, so this was simply an enforcement issue. Mr. Thomas cautioned the Committee that moving the cigarette receptacles from the front of the HSB would only lead to an increased accumulation of cigarette butts littering the ground around the entrance of the Building as visitors would improperly dispose of their used cigarettes when entering the Building.

Mr. Merlino left the meeting at 12:38 p.m.

Mr. Pitkin pointed out that there was currently no signage at the HSB indicating the 50 foot smoking rule and he suggested that a sign be placed at the front of the Building to notify smokers of the policy.

Following further discussion, Ms. Weaver resumed the agenda review with Item 18, which consisted of a request for an executive session to discuss the job performance of a DSS employee.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to declare executive session to discuss the employment history of a particular person, pursuant to Section 105(f) of the Public Officers Law.

Executive session was held from 12:40 p.m. to 12:50 p.m.

Upon reconvening, Mr. Pitkin noted that no Committee action had been taken during the executive session.

Concluding the agenda review, Ms. Weaver addressed the Referral Item listed on the last page of the agenda, pertaining to the exempt classification associated with the position of Deputy Commissioner as compared to surrounding Counties. She apprised that subsequent to her inquiry to all Counties of New York State as to which

incorporated Deputy Commissioner positions, she had received responses from 33 Counties, five of which did not employ a Deputy Commissioner, while 24 others incorporated exempt Deputy Commissioner positions; three had tested Deputy Commissioner positions and one County was awaiting classification for the position from the New York State Civil Service Department.

Subsequent to a brief discussion on the issue, Mr. Pitkin stated that he did not feel further consideration of this matter was necessary as the Board of Supervisors had already approved of the implementation of a non-tested Deputy Commissioner position by resolution.

As there was no further business to come before the Committee, on motion by Mr. Bentley and seconded by Mr. McDevitt, Mr. Pitkin adjourned the meeting at 12:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist